

# The British Empire League in Canada.

SPEECH DELIVERED BY THE PRESIDENT, LT.-COL. GEORGE  
T. DENISON, IN MOVING THE ADOPTION OF THE  
ANNUAL REPORT AT THE ANNUAL  
MEETING OF THE LEAGUE.

HELD IN THE

Railway Committee Room, House of  
Commons, Ottawa.

—ON—

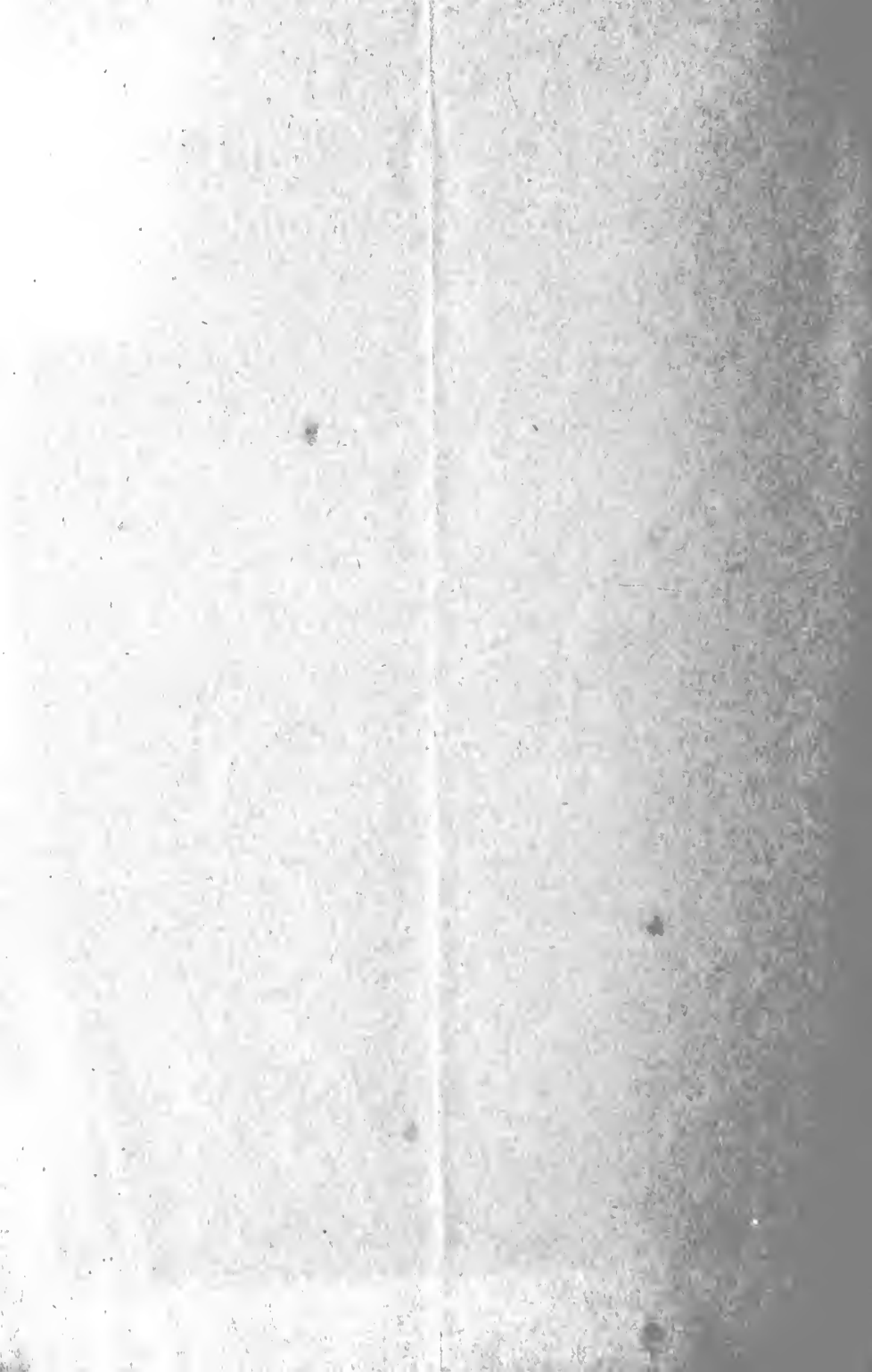
THURSDAY, 6th APRIL, 1899.



Printed by Order of the Annual Meeting.



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1899.



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# The British Empire League.



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# The British Empire League in Canada.

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# THE BRITISH EMPIRE LEAGUE IN CANADA.

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*Speech delivered by the President, Lt.-Col. George T. Denison, in moving the adoption of the Annual Report at the Annual Meeting of the League, held in the Railway Committee Room, House of Commons, Ottawa, on Thursday, 6th April, 1899. Printed by order of the Annual Meeting.*

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Lieut.-Col. Denison said: " The year that has passed since we last met has been a most important year in reference to the work of the British Empire League, and many striking events have happened which teach us lessons that we should carefully consider in framing our policy for the future. We have many things upon which we can look with great satisfaction. Since we last met the preference in our markets, which under certain conditions had previously been open to all countries, has been restricted to our empire. A preference has also been given to our sister colonies in the West Indies, and this example, we are gratified to find, has in a way been imitated by the Government of India, with the approval of the British Government, which is another move in the direction of the aims of our league. Almost simultaneously we see The London Times discussing a duty on wheat and sugar as a means of raising revenue. As this would not only raise revenue but help to raise wheat in Britain as well, it would aid to that extent in strengthening the empire. In reference to the preference to West Indian sugar, I wish to point out that I am informed that cane sugar in the United States has a preference through duties on beet root sugar, which, at present, is an advantage to West Indian sugar to the extent of 27 cents per hundred pounds, while the preference we have given in our market is only about eighteen cents per hundred

pounds. I may suggest that we in Canada should increase our preference to, say 40 per cent. of the duty, which would give our fellow-colonists a slightly greater preference than they now receive under the United States tariff. I need not say much about the fast Atlantic service, for all parties are united in favor of it, and we can only hope that it will be established at the earliest moment, for nothing would help more to show our position as a separate community upon this continent. We have been too backward in the past, and we should endeavor more and more to assert ourselves among the countries of the world. (Hear, hear.)

#### UNITED FOR DEFENCE.

There is one point I wish to press upon this meeting: there has been in the last 25 or 30 years a revolution in the affairs of the world in reference to national relations and methods of defence. Germany has united, and we remember that it was accomplished under the stress and trial of war. The German Empire was inaugurated in the greatest palace of France, to the sound of the German cannon firing upon the capital city of their enemy. Italy, as the result of three wars, has been united and consolidated. The United States during the last year have launched out into the politics of the world, have adopted expansion as their policy, and are pressing their views on the Filipinos with rifles, maxims and field guns. We have discovered this year once more by hard facts what history in all ages has shown—that nations cannot expect to exist upon the security of their natural moral rights, unless those rights are supported by physical strength. Spain has been taught that might prevails, and she has been crushed and humiliated for doing what the United States are now obliged to do themselves in the Philippine Islands. The greatest lesson of all, however, which this last year has taught us is that which we learn from the impending fate of China. There is a nation of three hundred to four hundred millions of people, honest traders, I am told, certainly most inoffensive and unaggressive; a nation which, from its peaceful character, industrious habits and natural reserve, should have been the



last to have aroused hostility. It has neglected its defences and has taken no effective steps to protect itself from wrong, and what do we see now as the result? The nations in the possession of navies and armies are commencing to tear it to pieces and divide the spoils. (Hear, hear.)

Do we hear of any of these nations being worried by conscientious scruples, or complaining of the moral wrong of this partition? No; the whole disputing is concentrated over the division of the spoils. Now what is the lesson this thing teaches us? It is this; that nations can only enjoy their freedom by being able to defend it, and that the true policy for nations under present conditions is to be closely united within themselves, to be thoroughly organized and equipped, and to be able in case of necessity to use their whole strength to the greatest advantage for the common safety—and to do this nations must be self-sustaining. (Applause.)

#### THE SELFISH WAR OF TRADE.

In trade, also, we see the selfish war going on and increasing. While England is talking about the "open door," which is a fine phrase for theorists, she is finding other nations busily engaged in shutting their own doors. Each nation year by year is being forced to protect its industries by tariff regulations. France is following this policy; Germany and Russia also, and the most prosperous of them all, the United States, is carrying the principle to the greatest extent. One can see that this principle is growing and will grow, for the selfishness of nations seems, if possible, to be increasing every day. Now, how is the British nation placed? It has the best chances of all if it sees how to take advantage of them. (Applause.)

It has the largest territory, with every variety of climate and products, with the greatest possibilities of development, with prospects of an internal trade far beyond all other countries. It has the best coaling stations scattered everywhere, but to secure and retain her advantages the empire must be consolidated, both for trade and defence, and this can be fully accomplished without the slightest aggression. (Hear, hear.)

## WHERE SAFETY AND FREEDOM LIE.

If we Canadians desire to be free and safe it must be in that empire to which we are attached by every tie, and to which we must be ready to give our strength for the common defence, if we expect the enormous reserve force of that empire to be at our back if our life as a free people should ever be threatened. (Applause.)

It is necessary, therefore, for the prosperity and safety of all the parts, that the United Kingdom, India, Australasia, South Africa and Canada should all be firmly united so as to show a square front to any enemies that may attack us. This is the object of our league; to secure the permanent unity of the empire; and with the extraordinary development of nations and of military progress in them, our empire must also, if it desires security, be ready in every part to pay for that security and be ready to defend it. (Hear, hear.)

In past ages the wars between nations have been carried on by moderate sized armies, while the great bulk of the people attended to their usual business, except where interrupted in the actual theatre of war. For a thousand years wars had been conducted upon that principle, until the French Revolution, when in 1793, being threatened with invasion by combined Europe, 1,300,000 men were conscripted in France to defend her frontier. This was the first example of a nation almost taking up arms to defend herself. It changed the organization of armies; but later, under Napoleon, the nation returned more nearly to the old system of regular armies. In 1870 and since, however, the revolution in military defence in most civilized countries except our own has been completed. Now in France, Germany and Russia the whole people practically are trained for war. The war footing of the army in France is about 4,000,000 and some thousands of field guns; in Germany just about the same; in Russia the army on a war footing is said to be 3,400,000; Austria has a war strength of 2,750,000. As these forces in these countries are all organized, and arms, equipment and field guns ready, it will be seen that never before in history were such enormous military

preparations made. The navies have increased almost in the same ratio, our navy fortunately being more than equal to any two navies combined. With this outlook, with this condition of affairs outside, it is only wisdom for the wealthiest of all nations to consolidate its power in order to preserve its wealth, possessions and liberty. (Applause.)

#### WHAT IS CANADA DOING?

And what are we in Canada doing? We are following the example of the Chinese, and trusting to the forbearance and sense of honesty of other nations, instead of relying upon our own strength and the strength of the empire, to which we could better appeal if we did our own share properly. (Hear, hear.)

Thirty-eight thousand militia, drilled spasmodically, without the necessary equipment and departments, without reserves or even rifles to arm them, is no contribution to the strength of the empire. This should be changed at once. We should establish depots for training our fishermen and sailors to supplement the royal naval reserve, and the guns with which to train them, the barracks in which to house them, and the permanent instructional staff necessary to drill them, if judiciously placed in batteries in front of St. John, N.B., Charlottetown, Quebec and other seaports, would be aiding the British navy, which protects our mercantile marine, while matters could be arranged to make them a defence for those seaports, which at present would be at the mercy of any swift cruiser that, evading pursuit, might approach their wharves. (Hear, hear.)

Our militia should be largely increased, and supplies of all kinds provided, and in agreeing to do our share in developing and strengthening the military resources of the empire, in our own borders, we could fairly ask the mother country to remedy a danger which at present menaces the safety of our race.

#### THE FOOD SUPPLY.

I spoke very plainly on this point of the food supply last year, but the intervening months have produced such strong

evidence in support of my arguments that I wish to draw attention to the subject again. I said last year that an embargo on foodstuffs in Russia and the United States, rigidly carried out, would force the surrender of the mother country in a very few months. I have been told by trade theorists in England that the demand would create the supply, and that England could purchase food through neutral countries. I argued that an embargo by the two countries mentioned would necessarily be followed by an embargo in all importing countries at once, and in all other countries as soon as their surplus was exported. This last year has seen this view triumphantly vindicated. Mr. Leiter effected a corner in wheat in Chicago, purchasers became alarmed, prices increased, and wheat began to be picked up in other countries. What was the result? Spain, a country which about feeds itself, put on an embargo. I believe Italy did the same, or was on the point of doing so, while an embargo was being discussed in France and Germany. If this could be the result of the cornering operations of one dealer in one town in one exporting country, what would have happened if those two countries which control nearly nine-tenths of the wheat exports of the world were to withhold that amount? (Hear, hear.)

I have been told that no country could put on an embargo, that the people would rebel against being prevented from selling their produce, but I have one example which conclusively proves my argument. The southern States had the bulk of the cotton supply of the world when the civil war broke out in 1860. Their main industry was growing cotton, their capital, labor and business were mainly involved in the production and sale of it. To force Great Britain to recognize and assist them, in other words, to bring pressure to bear upon a neutral power, the southern Government placed an embargo on the export of cotton. At Great Britain's request the northern Government agreed to give permits to let it go to England. So that it was not the blockade alone which prevented its export. The southern Government maintained a strict embargo. When their troops were forced back the stores of

cotton were seized and paid for by the Confederate Government by receipts and Government bonds, and the cotton was burned. Mrs. Jefferson Davis, in her memoirs, says that her husband grudged every pound that got out. Now let us see what was the result of this embargo, and how far it was possible to enforce it. In 1860 England imported from the United States 1,115,890,608 pounds; in 1861 England imported from the United States 819,500,528 pounds; in 1862 England imported from the United States 13,524,224 pounds; in 1863 England imported from the United States 6,394,080 pounds; in 1864 England imported from the United States 14,198,688 pounds. The drop from 1,115,890,608 to 6,394,080 pounds, about one-half of one per cent., shows how complete this embargo was. The cotton famine has not been forgotten. The loss to the English people has been computed at £65,000,000, and yet this only affected one industry in one section of one kingdom. (Hear, hear.)

#### CONTROLLED BY RUSSIA AND AMERICA.

Nine-tenths of the population were able to help the tenth affected, and there was abundance of food for all. But extend that pressure, and let it be in food, which no one can do without, and let it extend over the whole ten-tenths (as would be the case in the event of a stoppage of food) and try to imagine the misery that would follow. Food would have to be rationed to rich and poor alike, for the starving masses would not allow all there was to be monopolized by the wealthy. Under such conditions, what heart could the Government be expected to display in the conduct of the struggle? Russia and the United States could control the export of 40,000,000 quarters out of 45,375,000 quarters exported by all nations in 1897. The late war between the United States and Spain is said to have cost the States nearly \$500,000,000. If the Government of Russia and the United States bought the full surplus from their people of 320,000,000 bushels at the present market price, it would only cost them about \$225,000,000, while even at \$1 a bushel it would only be \$320,000,000—the cheapest and most effective war measure that could be adopted. And this could be done by these countries without their having one

war vessel. I repeat, therefore, that this is the weak point of our empire; our food should be grown under our own flag, or there should be large stores in England, and a preference which would increase the growth of wheat to the extent of 10,000,000 quarters additional in the British Isles would be the best spent money for defence that could be expended, and a preference to the colonies would soon produce the balance within the empire. (Hear, hear.)

We should urge this upon the mother country, not because it would help us enormously, though that is no reason why we should not urge it, but because danger to the mother country is danger to us all.

#### TWO VITAL POINTS.

These are the two points for us to look forward to, a thorough organization of our own forces in Canada, with a liberal assistance from us toward the royal naval reserve and other defences of the empire, and a provision for the food supply of the empire being made safe. These should go together, for there is not much use in our sending our sailors, well trained, to man war vessels, to defend our empire, unless it is understood that a ship without food is as useless as one without guns, or powder or coal or men. A number of requisites are absolutely necessary to make an effective navy, or an effective defence, and the want of one makes all the others useless, and food is one of these indispensable requisites. We cannot press this too earnestly upon the mother country, but we cannot talk to them about their duties or necessities until we first attend to ours, and show our willingness to take up our share of the common burden. The answer to my argument from the English point of view is that my suggestion to secure a safe supply of food might be a great material advantage to Canada. This should not be considered. A preference to the British farmer would increase the growth of wheat to sixteen or seventeen million quarters in the United Kingdom. This would do us no good financially, but would be a great service to us, because it would make our empire more secure. (Hear, hear.)

If large stores of grain were accumulated in England, it would be no advantage to us pecuniarily, but it would strengthen the whole empire, and I for one would be delighted to see either plan adopted, for at present none of us are safe. No nation or power can be independent that is not self-dependent. The lesson taught us by the course of events is to consolidate and unite our empire, both for trade and defence. (Applause.)

I move the adoption of the Annual Report.

This was seconded by the Hon. R. R. Dobell, and carried.



## ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

### *EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE*

OF THE

## **British Empire League in Canada.**

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TORONTO, March 20th, 1899.

The Executive Committee have much pleasure in being able to lay before the Annual General Meeting of the League a satisfactory report of the advances which have been made towards Imperial Unity during the past year.

Shortly after the last general meeting the preference given by the Canadian Tariff which under certain conditions had previously been open to all countries was restricted to the Empire, and an important part of our policy was accomplished. The granting of a preference on sugar in favor of our Sister Colonies in the West Indies, was also a most gratifying feature of the legislation of the last session of our Parliament, and we hope that this preference may be increased so

that West Indian cane sugar may enter our markets on terms at least as favorable as those under which it enters the United States.

In the Report of last year the hope was expressed that a reduced postal rate would be established between Canada and the rest of the Empire, and largely through the action of the Postmaster General of the Dominion, this has been brought about as between Canada and the Mother Country, as well as the greater part of the rest of the Empire.

Your Committee also desire to express their strong appreciation and full acknowledgement of the valuable services to the cause rendered by Henniker Heaton, Esq., M.P., The Rt. Hon. Joseph Chamberlain, Sir Daniel Tennant, Sir Walter Peace and others, without which this work could not have been accomplished.

Your Committee also draw attention to the gratifying fact that in the Mother Country the question of a duty upon wheat, sugar and other articles is being discussed. If such a tariff is made preferential to the Colonies as our tariff is to the Mother Country, one of the strongest commercial bonds of union would be created. A preference of this nature would be of great benefit to Canada, the West Indies and the other Colonies, while the Empire as a whole would be materially strengthened by an increase of food products grown under the flag. It is impossible to over-estimate the importance of a certain supply of food under the control of the Empire. Your Committee earnestly hope that some practical result will follow this discussion in England.

Your Committee are pleased to notice that public opinion is strongly in favour of the establishment of a fast line of Steamers on the Atlantic, and trust that immediate steps will be taken to provide a service that will bring travel and trade to Canadian ports, and (as the ships will be constructed under Admiralty supervision), be a valuable contribution to the Naval strength of the Empire. This should be at once accomplished at whatever financial cost is fairly necessary.

The maintenance of a Royal Naval Reserve in Canada, and the establishment of a Naval Militia, are projects which



the League urges strongly upon the Government and people of Canada. The request of our League to the League in England to use their influence in this matter has borne fruit, and the action of the Dominion Government, on the line suggested by Mr. Goschen, the First Lord of the Admiralty, is alone necessary to secure the establishment of a force equipped and ready to assist the fleets of the Empire in the event of war. The Committee are confident that an expenditure of public funds for this purpose would be endorsed by the people of this country.

In order that Canadian trade with the rest of the Empire may increase and flourish it is most important that a fair and equitable insolvency law should be passed, not only to assimilate the law throughout the Dominion, but to provide that in cases of insolvency the assets may be divided fairly among the creditors, and that the creditors abroad shall have their rights as well guarded as those at home. It is hoped that some satisfactory measure will be passed at the present session of Parliament.

Your Committee regret that delays have occurred in the negotiations in reference to the laying of a British Pacific Cable. The deputation appointed at the last Annual Meeting to wait upon the Premier, placed the arguments in favour of the project fully before him. The deputation were received with cordial sympathy, and your Committee cannot but feel that the delay is only temporary, and that active measures will soon be taken; for on this question we are confident the public are with us.

The Parent League is engaged in endeavours to secure legislation to provide that an alien becoming naturalized in any British colony, shall be recognized as a British subject throughout the Empire. As this is one more step towards the unification of the Empire, it will necessarily secure the support and endorsement of members of the British Empire League all over the world.

The prospect of the completion of the federation of the Australasian Colonies is also gratifying to this League, not

only for the advantage we feel it will be to those Colonies, but because it is another step in the direction of unity.

Your Committee express their satisfaction at the extraordinary growth of the sentiment in favour of the principles of the League. It is not confined to any class or creed or political party, but wherever the flag flies,—wherever Her Majesty's sway is recognized,—the evidences of a broadening Imperial sentiment are constantly being displayed. As far as educating public opinion is concerned our work has been most successful, for deep in the hearts of the people the sentiment existed, and has been easily aroused. All that is required now is for our rulers to take a wide and far-seeing view of what should be done, and any action taken by any Government in England or the Colonies, for strengthening and consolidating the British Empire as a whole, will receive the hearty support of the people.

All of which is respectfully submitted.

GEORGE T. DENISON,  
*President.*

GEORGE E. EVANS,  
*Hon. Secretary.*

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